DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 395 CS 013 170

AUTHOR Cairney, Trevor H.; Ruge, Jenny
TITLE Clash of Discourses: Examining the Literacy Practices of Home, School and Community.
PUB DATE 1997-12-00
NOTE 42p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference (Scottsdale, AZ, December 3-6, 1997).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Case Studies; *Cultural Context; Discourse Analysis; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Language Minorities; *Literacy; Naturalistic Observation; Student Empowerment
IDENTIFIERS *Australia; *Discourse Communities; Learning Environments; Literacy as a Social Process

ABSTRACT

A study, funded by the Australian government, explored differences in the literacy practices of schools, families, and community groups. In particular, the study examined the matches and mismatches between the discourse practices of home and school, and the impact that any differences had on students' school success. Also observed were innovative attempts to create school curricula and learning environments that meet the needs of specific students and which facilitate effective partnerships among home, school, and community. Case studies were conducted in four schools (one secondary, three elementary) which had been identified as adopting innovative strategies to respond to differences in language and literacy practices in their communities; all the schools had significant populations of language minority children. Detailed observation and discourse analysis of the literacy practices of 35 case study children as they moved about at home, school, and community contexts was carried out. Transcripts (n=13) of discourse analysis illustrate the research results. One important finding was that children from "minority" language and cultural backgrounds are not the only ones who may find school literacy less than empowering. While many children from mainstream culture may be academically successful, their learning is nevertheless constrained by mismatches between literacy at home and at school. It is clear from this study that families and schools differ markedly in their literacy practices and values and significant differences exist among families in the way they define and use literacy. (Contains 43 references.) (NKA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 418 395

Clash of Discourses: Examining the literacy practices of home, school and community

Trevor H. Cairney
Jenny Ruge

University of Western Sydney,
Sydney,
Australia

Paper presented to 1997 National Reading Conference,
Scottsdale, Arizona, 3-6 December.

Address for correspondence:

Professor Trevor Cairney,
University of Western Sydney Nepean,
P.O. Box 10, Kingswood, NSW, 2747,
AUSTRALIA

Fax: 011 61 247 364 186
Email: t.cairney@uws.edu.au

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Cairney

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Clash of Discourses: Examining the literacy practices of home, school and community

Trevor H. Cairney
Jenny Ruge

1. Purpose of the Research

The project described in this paper was funded by the Australian government[1]. Its purpose was to explore differences in the literacy practices of schools, families and community groups. In particular, it attempted to examine the matches and mismatches between the discourse practices of home and school, and the impact that any differences have on students' school success.

It sought to:

- observe and analyse innovative attempts to create school curricula and learning environments that meet the needs of specific students and which facilitate effective partnerships between home, school and community;
- identify matches and mismatches between the literacy practices of specific families and the schools of their children;
- examine the impact of mismatches on the school success of children.

2. Related research

2.1 Literacy as social and cultural practice

A central premise of the sociocultural approach to literacy that influenced this research is that literacy is not a single unitary skill; rather, it is a social practice which has many specific manifestations (Cairney, 1995; Luke, 1993; Welch & Freebody, 1993; Gee, 1990). There are many forms of literacy, each with specific purposes and contexts in which they are used. This is experienced as a set of social practices embedded within specific literacy events. As such, literacy cannot be separated from the people who use it. Literacy is a process situated in sociocultural contexts defined by members of a group through their actions with, through and about language. To understand literacy fully, therefore, we need to understand the groups and institutions through which we are socialised into specific literacy practices (Bruner, 1986; Gee, 1990).

The concepts "literacy event" and "literacy practices" were important to the conceptual framework that has influenced our work. The term *literacy event* has its roots in the sociolinguistic idea of speech events dating back to the work of Dell Hymes in 1962, but the concept was developed further by Heath (1983) to describe a distinct communicative situation where literacy has a key role. For Heath, a literacy event is "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretive processes" (1983, p. x). According to Barton (1994), "literacy *events* are the particular activities in which literacy has a role: they may be regular repeated activities. Literacy *practices* are the general cultural ways of utilizing literacy that people draw upon in a literacy event" (p. 5).

Street (1995) explored the distinction between literacy practices and literacy events further by arguing that whenever people engage in a literacy event they have "culturally constructed models of the literacy event in [their] minds" (p. 133). He used the term *literacy practices* "to indicate this level of the cultural uses and meanings of reading and writing. Literacy practices [refer] not only to the event itself but the conceptions of the

---

[1] The project described in this paper was funded by the Australian government as a National Children's Literacy Project through the Department of Emlpoyment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs under the Australian Language and Literacy Policy

reading and writing process that people hold when they are engaged in the event" (p. 133).

Literacy practices are situationally defined in and through the interactions and practices of students and teachers at school, and family and community members at home (Cairney, 1995; Collins & Green, 1992). When people engage in specific literacy events, they act and interact in ways which socially construct, and are constructed by, the general cultural ways of using literacy. Thus, literacy events contribute to, and constitute part of, the literacy practices of the particular classroom, family or community group. In this research project, similarities and differences in home and school literacy practices were identified through intensive study of the myriad literacy events engaged in by the participating students at home and at school.

One of the consequences of adopting a sociocultural approach to learning and literacy is that it entails "a shift away from a view of individual learners to a view of learning as participation in a community of practice" (Moll, 1993). The emphasis then needs to be not on how individual children learn, but on why and how people learn through their participation in the practices that define specific groups and communities, how communities organise their resources, and how participation in the culture shapes identity.

Like schools and classrooms, families can be understood as cultures[2] in which participants (family members) construct particular ways of acting, believing and valuing through the interactions among family members. Thus, families construct particular views of literacy, and what it means to be literate. As Hannon (1995) suggests, "The family's literacy values and practices will shape the course of the child's literacy development in terms of the opportunities, recognition, interaction and models available to them" (p. 104). That is, families' shared ways of participating in literate behaviour may be defined as the opportunities for literacy learning that family members have through the provision of resources and experiences, the recognition and valuing of members achievements, the interactions surrounding literacy events, and the models of literacy demonstrated by family members (Hannon, 1995).

Since literacy is a social and cultural practice, members of different cultures engage in different literate practices and differ in what they see as literate behaviour (Ferdman, 1990). In any culturally diverse society, there will be different conceptions of what it is to be literate, that is, there are "multiple literacies" (Gee, 1990). Research into family literacy practices across cultural groups, then, has the potential to contribute a great deal to our understanding of the relationship between literacy practices at home and at school, and the impact of this relationship on school success.

Ogbu (1992) argued that the impact of cultural differences on school success needs to be considered in the light of comparative research among differing minority groups. He distinguished between three types of minority groups: a) autonomous groups, which are culturally or linguistically distinct but not politically, socially or economically subordinated by any other group; b) immigrant or voluntary groups, who typically have immigrated in search of economic well-being, better overall opportunities, and/or greater political freedom; and c) non-immigrant or involuntary groups, whose subordinated position in society is a result of slavery, conquest, or colonization.

Ogbu concluded that the historical and structural contexts of 'becoming' a minority group influence the community forces which operate within the group. Ogbu found in

---

[2] Culture may be defined as the beliefs, values and ways of acting that mark membership of a specific group (Au, 1993). As she pointed out that this view of culture entails a number of characteristics: culture is learned through the interactions of members of a group; it is shared, as a way of thinking and acting shared by group members; it is an adaptation, in the sense that it adapts to specific political and economic conditions; and it is continually changing.

his research that immigrant or voluntary groups interpret cultural and linguistic differences as obstacles to be overcome,whereas involuntary groups interpret these as differences to be maintained as an expression of identity. He also observed that while both types of minority group develop a range of educational strategies that may or may not lead to school success, involuntary groups have a larger proportion of strategies that will not lead to success, and therefore are the groups most likely to need culturally compatible schooling.

While accepting that there are group-based differences in literacy practices, it is important to recognise that there is also within-group diversity. As Ferdman (1990) pointed out, "even valid group level characterizations are not automatically applicable to all or even most group members" (p.184), and even determining group membership can be problematic (Cairney, et al, 1995). Thus, to fully understand the interrelationships between group and individual determinants of literate behaviour, we need to take account of both between-group and within-group diversity.

Ferdman (1990) argued that "cultural identity mediates the process of becoming literate as well as the types of literate behaviour in which a person subsequently engages" (p.197). Since literacy education is not simply a matter of teaching particular skills, but involves the transmission of values, each person's cultural identity both shapes and is shaped by their experiences of literacy education. When there is a mismatch between the definition and significance of literacy as they are represented in a person's cultural identity and in the learning situation, the individual is faced with a choice: to either adopt the perspective of the school and risk undermining their cultural identity, or to resist the externally imposed activities at the risk of becoming alienated from the school (Cummins, 1986; Ferdman, 1990; Au, 1993).

2.2 Social and cultural differences and the impact of these on school success

Two major theories have been suggested as possible explanations for schools' failure to ensure high levels of academic success for students from minority backgrounds. The first is the theory of *cultural discontinuity*, while the second can be termed the theory of *structural inequality* (Au, 1993).

The theory of cultural discontinuity, or cultural difference, suggests that cultural mismatches between teachers and students may result in difficulties in communication and interaction in the classroom (Jacob & Jordan, 1987). These differences, or mismatches, work against the literacy learning of students whose home culture does not reflect that of the school. The theory of structural inequality looks beyond mismatches between the culture of the home and the school. It suggests that the lack of educational success of students of diverse backgrounds reflects structural inequalities in the broader social, political and economic spheres (Au, 1993; Ogbu, 1987). This theory takes into account the power relationships between groups, and argues that schools function to maintain the status quo. Au (1993) argued that neither of these two theories on their own adequately explains the continuing educational disadvantage of students from minority backgrounds, and that both theories need to be considered in any attempt to improve students' chances of educational success.

Critical analyses of social and cultural differences and the impact of these on school success tend to adopt a 'structural inequality' perspective. They attribute educational disadvantage to "oppressive social structures that create vast inequalities in power and opportunity favoring the dominant group" (Au, 1995, p.87). Au suggests that critical analyses, while contributing to literacy research by making "the political nature of literacy and literacy learning overt" (p.89), concentrate too much on social class at the expense of issues of ethnicity and language. Ogbu's work was cited as an exception to this criticism.

Luke (1995) has adopted a critical analysis perspective in attempting to explain why it is that differences in literacy practices result in differences in school success. He argued that:

> ... some variations of holistic models naturalise particular interactional patterns and textual practices in ways that systematically exclude those students from economically marginal and culturally different backgrounds (Luke, 1995, p. 16)

He explained the process through which this exclusion occurs, and questioned the inevitability of school disadvantage of students of minority backgrounds:

> ... many contemporary folk theories of literacy assume that school acquired cultural capital is a causal factor for particular social, economic and cultural outcomes. Schools clearly can 'make a difference' in the construction of students' cultural capital. The selective traditions of literacy education may have a key role in shaping students' habituses and building their cultural capital. Schooling entails the acquisition of embodied practices, development of a 'portfolio' of discursive and material demonstrations of those practices, and achievement of actual institutional credentials. But educational institutions cannot provide product guarantees for the value of this capital. (Luke, 1995, p.18)

Coe (1995) pointed out that even the way in which 'school achievement' is defined and assessed can disadvantage certain groups of students. He argued that schools fail to recognise that literacy is situated, that it varies according to the context and purposes for which it is used, and that a person may be highly literate within one situation and not in another. Generally, the assessment of school achievement suffers similar bias.

The study which forms the basis of this report attempts to combine elements of a critical analysis with elements of a cultural difference analysis. That is, while it focuses on classroom level interactions and individual students, it seeks to understand these within the broader context of cultural and/or linguistic differences, and differences between home and school.

2.3 Studies of cultural difference

Recent Australian studies (Cairney, Ruge, Buchanan, Lowe & Munsie, 1995; Cairney, Lowe & Sproats, 1995; Breen et al, 1994; Freebody & Ludwig, 1995) have shown that there are differences between the language and literacy practices of school and community. In contrast, evidence exists which suggests that diversity of literacy practices within and between schools is far less evident (Cairney, Lowe & Sproats, 1995; Freebody, Ludwig & Gunn, 1995) than might be expected. This evidence is consistent with other research that has identified the difference between the language and literacy of school and that of homes and communities as a significant factor in the achievement or non achievement of students at school (e.g. Heath, 1993; Scribner & Cole, 1981).

A study of differences in the educational achievement of students from urban, rural and remote school in Western Australia (Young, 1994) found that location of the school did not significantly affect student performance. The two factors which were found to have most influence on students' school success were whether the student was from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, and the socioeconomic status of the school.

Foster (1992) suggested that research over the past two decades or so "has found that many of the difficulties African-American students encounter in becoming literate result in part from the misunderstandings that occur when the speaking and communication styles of their community vary from those expected and valued in the school setting" (p.303). Foster recognised that research has contributed to our understanding of differences in language use at home and at school, has helped us to recognise the

contextually specific nature of language use, and has demonstrated that classrooms are cultures with culturally specific ways of using language. However, she argued that it has "done little to advance our ability to use knowledge about cultural and linguistic differences to improve classroom learning" (p.304) and, in particular, has had little impact on creating classroom environments, pedagogy, or curricula "specifically designed to improve the literacy learning of African-American children" (p. 308). Foster suggested that part of the reason for this is that researchers have concentrated on explaining cultural discontinuities and differences in linguistic codes, and have devoted little attention to differences in interactional styles and ways of using language at home and at school.

Willis (1995) has argued that children from cultural and linguistic minority groups continue to have difficulty in achieving school success because the dominant pedagogical approaches are based on "a narrow understanding of school knowledge and literacy, which are defined and defended as what one needs to know and how one needs to know it in order to be successful in school and society" (p.34).

Several researchers have investigated the impact of differences between the cultural beliefs and expectations of Native Americans, and those of the dominant Anglo approach (Deyhle & LeCompte, 1994; Locust, 1989; McCarty, 1987). For example, Locust (1989) examined traditional native American belief systems, including their holistic approach to life and death, their emphasis on non-verbal communication, and their valuing of visual, motor and memory skills over verbal skills. She investigated the ways in which these beliefs conflict with the education system, and argued that traditional psychological education tests reflect the dominant culture resulting in native American children achieving low scores and being treated as learning disabled.

Like Locust, Deyhle and LeCompte (1994) argued that cultural differences in expectations and approaches result in the low school achievement of native American children in middle schools. Through an in-depth case study of one middle school, they showed how some features of the educational structure and pedagogy were congruent with Navajo culture, while many were not. They argued that "Navajo children face conflict not only because their parents' conceptions of proper ways to raise children are different from those of Anglos, but also because of a related set of differences in attitudes and beliefs about stages in child development" (p. 157). They found that although many educators at the school were genuinely interested in good teaching, cultural differences other than language were ignored, rendered invisible, or considered to be irrelevant. As a consequence, few teachers made any alterations to their teaching to accomodate their predominantly Navajo population, and the school encouraged parental involvement only so that it could impose school sanctioned expectations and practices.

One particular group of studies which adopt a 'cultural discontinuity' perspective is the set of bilingual analyses. Bilingual analyses refer to those "studies of literacy in which the reader or writer uses two or more languages" (Au, 1995, p. 92). Au argued that bilingual analyses show "how linguistic diversity may influence the acquisition and practice of literacy ... (and) may offer more guidance to educators and policy-makers concerned with improving the literacy achievement of students of diverse backgrounds than do critical and cultural difference analyses" (p. 94).

For many years there was widespread belief that one of the major causes of educational difficulty for students from minority language backgrounds was the task of code-switching from the language of the home to the language of the school. While students have long since been shown to be quite capable of effective code-switching, the assumption has led to the development of bilingual programs aimed at providing students with instruction in their home language (L1) in the hope of improving educational outcomes in the school language (L2). However, research into the effectiveness of bilingual programs has produced conflicting results (Cummins, 1986).

Bilingual programs have generated much debate among educators and policy-makers. On the one hand, supporters of bilingual education argue that children cannot learn effectively in a language in which they have limited proficiency, and that instruction in L1 is necessary to sustain academic progress while learning L2. In this way, it is argued, the effects of the mismatch between home and school languages can be minimised. Cummins (1986) termed this the "linguistic mismatch" hypothesis. On the other hand, those who oppose bilingual programs argue that less exposure to L2, which is seen as a consequence of bilingual instruction, cannot lead to increased achievement in L2. What is needed, they argue, is increased exposure to L2. Cummins called this the "insufficient exposure" hypothesis. However, he argued that neither of these hypotheses can adequately account for what research tells us about bilingual learners.

A recent example of a bilingual analysis is a study by Jimenez, Garcia and Pearson (1995), which attempted to identify what characteristics distinguish a proficient bilingual reader from a marginally proficient bilingual reader and a proficient monolingual reader. These researchers suggested that too much attention has been given to language minority students who are unsuccessful at school, and that "a more constructive research approach involves the search for enabling, rather than disabling, attributes of nonmainstream populations" (p. 68). Through qualitative analysis of a range of types of responses to reading tasks, they found that proficient bilingual readers demonstrate a "flexible, multistrategic approach to reading (including) strategies that are unique to biliterate individuals" (p. 88). Furthermore, their analyses of the responses and experiences of a marginally proficient bilingual reader indicated that "bilingualism can be debilitating if a student possesses a faulty conception of reading, a fragmented deployment of reading strategies, and, most important, a failure to appreciate the advantages of bilingualism" (p. 88).

Cummins (1986) has argued that the educational success or failure of minority students is "a function of the extent to which schools reflect or counteract the power relations that exist within the broader society" (p. 32). His work provides a useful framework for evaluating the efforts of the schools included in this research. Cummins identified four structural elements of schooling which, he argued, influence the extent to which students from minority backgrounds are empowered or disadvantaged:

> ... these elements include the incorporation of minority students' culture and language, inclusion of minority communities in the education of their children, pedagogical assumptions and practices operating in the classroom, and the assessment of minority students (Cummins, 1986, p. 24).

2.4 Identifying mismatches between home and school

Classrooms are dynamic interactional spaces where individuals come together for the purpose of schooling to construct situated definitions of teacher, student, knowledge, values, and so on (Fernie et al, 1988; Green, Kantor & Rogers, 1991). Thus, "the culture of the classroom can be seen as a dynamic system of values, beliefs, and standards, developed through understandings which the teacher and the students have come to share" (Au, 1993, p. 9). Recognising classrooms as cultures entails acknowledging that literacy in classrooms is more than reading and writing, that "it also involves the communicative processes through which it is constructed" (Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, 1992, p.121).

Using the methodology of interactional sociolinguistics, the Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group (1992) has shown how literate actions and what counts as literacy are constructed through the actions and interactions with and about text that occur in everyday classroom situations. They point out that students construct a model of literacy based on the literate actions in which they engage, and that the model or models

that are constructed reflect school literacy and may support or constrain students' use of literacy in contexts outside the classroom. Thus, "student actions and statements (are) a patterned way of acting or communicating that students have learned from the opportunities afforded them in ... classrooms" (p.145) and do not necessarily reflect students' ability.

However, in attempting to understand how literate action is constructed in classrooms, the Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group acknowledge a range of sources of influence both inside and outside the group (eg. family, community, peer group, education system). They suggest that studies of classroom interaction cannot, of themselves, illuminate the ways in which literacy is defined and used by individuals and groups:

> ... a focus on the actions and interactions of members of the group is necessary but not sufficient to define literate actions and to understand what counts as literacy (Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, 1992, p.137).

Puro & Bloome (1987) have highlighted both the explicit and implicit nature of classroom communication in instruction. They suggest that the "implicit influence of classroom communication on instruction is often overlooked, yet it has powerful effects on instruction and on what children learn in school" (p.26). They point out that communication is interpreted using more than just the explicit content of the message, and that the interactional context is taken into account when teachers and students communicate with each other. They go further in suggesting that the interactional context is not something that simply exists in the classroom (or anywhere else), but is constructed by teachers and students in their interactions with each other. Puro and Bloome argue that classroom learning includes "learning the academic and social processes for acquiring knowledge and acquiring new learning strategies" (p.28), and that what constitutes classroom learning will be different for different students, depending on their social roles and status as well as differences in the frames of reference that students bring to the classroom. They define the concept of procedural display as "teachers and students displaying to each other those interactional behaviours necessary to get through a lesson without necessarily engaging the substantive content of the lesson" (p.29). They argue that students contextualise what they learn in the context of communication (both explicit and implicit) in the classroom, so teachers need to examine the nature of that communication and the effects it has on students' construction of learning.

2.5 The way ahead

Research from a broad range of disciplines and perpectives has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the interrelationships between culture, language, literacy and school success. No longer is the failure of children from minority backgrounds attributed to deficits in their family environments, linguistic codes, or the children themselves, at least among researchers. However, the difficulties associated with applying these understandings to the development of culturally responsive classroom environments and pedagogy have meant that the research is still largely theoretical (Foster, 1992). As Foster warned:

> If this line of research is to have a significant impact on practice, researchers must explain and practitioners must understand the cultural, linguistic, and sociolinguistic principles undergirding (culturally responsive) practices. If teachers are going to become reflective practitioners, they need to possess both theoretical and practical knowledge of how to use cultural, linguistic, and sociolinguistic information to develop ways of teaching that not only respect cultural diversity but insure high levels of literacy (p.309).

Gee (1990) has suggested that "short of radical social change" there is "no access to power in society without control over the social practices in thought, speech and writing

essay-text literacy and its attendant world view" (p. 67). We need to ask constantly, what does this mean for the way literacy is defined and used at school, the programs we initiate with and for families, and the relationships that exist between schools and communities? (Cairney, 1994).

The match and mismatch in language and literacy between home/community and school is of vital importance in addressing the specific needs of all students, but in particular, those who experience difficulties with literacy and schooling. However, there is still much to be learned about this topic. What we do know is that classrooms are not simple places; they are dynamic interactional spaces where individuals come together for the purpose of schooling to construct situated definitions of teacher, student, knowledge, values and so on (Fernie, 1988; Green, Kantor & Rogers, 1991). In the words of Bruner (1986), they are a forum for negotiating culture. But whose culture, and on what (and whose) terms is this culture negotiated? Furthermore, what impact do such practices have on the achievement of all students? (Cairney, 1994).

We already know that talk associated with literacy within the home is related to differences in culture and language (e.g. Heath, 1983; Cairney, Ruge, Buchanan, Lowe & Munsie, 1995; Freebody & Ludwig, 1995) and that this is related to school success. There is preliminary evidence suggesting that the way teachers shape classroom discourse is at times limited in scope and not reflective of the diversity of student language and culture (Cairney, Sproats & Lowe, 1995; Freebody & Ludwig, 1995; Gutierrez, 1993). As well, there is preliminary evidence to indicate that changes in classroom programs and environments can be made to make them more reflective of the cultural and linguistic diversity of students (e.g. Wilson Keenan, Willett and Solsken, 1993; Neuman & Roskos, 1995). Finally, there is some initial evidence concerning the nature of family and community literacy practices (e.g. Breen et al, 1994; Cairney, Ruge, Buchanan, Lowe & Munsie, 1995; Freebody & Ludwig, 1995; Heath, 1983; Teale, 1984; Wells, 1985). However, there are still a number of issues for which the evidence is inconclusive and which are of critical importance for ongoing research (Cairney & Ruge, 1996).

Identifying mismatches between students' home and school cultures necessarily involves understanding the different ways in which students construct their view of literacy through their interactions at home and at school. Developing such understanding requires detailed analysis of a range of literate actions and interactions in home and school contexts.

The project which forms the basis of this report breaks new ground in that it attempts to go beyond theory and to develop school-based and classroom-based strategies that not only take account of cultural and linguistic discontinuities, but empower all students to become literate and achieve school success. In doing so, it seeks to empower schools and teachers to develop closer ties with students' homes and communities so that mismatches can be recognised and understood, and so that curricula can be developed to support the educational success of all students.

3. Methodology and design

3.1 Aims of the project

The project sought to provide the following:

- Detailed description and discourse analysis of the literacy practices of students in a number of different schools (primary and secondary) paying particular attention to 'school' and 'non school' literacy practices in use within these sites by students and teachers, and the spoken discourse practices within which they are embedded.

- Parallel description and discourse analysis of the home and community literacy practices of students, and the teachers and community members with whom students have a relationship (eg. family members, community language school staff, homework centre staff, friends).
- Description of student school achievement in literacy and learning.
- Description and interpretive analysis of student, teacher, parent and community member views on English literacy and support of English literacy learning in school and community contexts.

3.2 Data collection methods and procedures

3.2.1 Negotiating entry and selecting participants

The project was designed to be conducted in two major phases. In the first phase of the project, case studies were conducted of four schools (one secondary and three elementary) which had been identified as adopting innovative strategies to acknowledge and respond to differences in the language and literacy practices of the communities they serve. The second phase involved detailed observation and discourse analysis of the literacy practices of 35 case study children as they move in and out of home, school and community contexts that involve the use of literacy. Results from both phases are described in the final report from our research (Cairney & Ruge, 1997). This paper attempts to provide an insight into the findings in Phase 2.

The selection of sites for the second Home/School phase of this project was made through negotiation with the individual schools involved in the Innovative Practices phase. It was also decided to include in this phase one school that had not been involved in the Innovative Practices phase of the research. The following schools participated in this second major phase of the project:

- *Ridgehaven Girls' High School* - included because it was the only secondary school involved in the Innovative Practices phase of the project, and staff expressed interest in continuing their involvement in the project.

- *St Joseph's Catholic Primary School* - perhaps unique in terms of demographics and curricular response to the needs of students from non English-speaking backgrounds. A school with 95% of its population from non-English speaking backgrounds. The Principal and executive staff expressed a desire to be involved in the Home/School phase. Classroom teachers agreed to be involved after discussions with the researchers at a school staff meeting.

- *Woodgate Public School* - included because it was the only school included in the Innovative Practices phase which had a significant proportion of students of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background (35%). Staff agreed to be involved after lengthy discussions with the researchers at a staff meeting.

- *Jersey Road Public School* - Principal and staff readily agreed to be involved. This school was selected because it has a large non English-speaking population, but had not adapted curriculum in specific ways to acknowledge the diversity of its community. It was selected to provide a valuable comparison to the other schools included in the project.

This phase of the project involved the observation of 35 students in a number of different schools (primary and secondary) and community contexts. The students chosen were not the only focus of this phase. Rather, they provided a methodological sampling procedure to enable sampling of events leading to meaningful observations in the diverse language and literacy contexts experienced by the students. These students in effect guided our observation of diverse contexts with the team observing discourse in contexts where the students learn and use literacy. They served a 'tracer' role,

allowing us to observe their literacy practices as well as those for the people with whom they interacted day by day.

The method of selecting participant families and students was negotiated in each school. One school indicated that a general call for volunteers would be the most effective and appropriate method of selection. Another school indicated that families would need to be selected and approached individually so that the purpose of the research could be outlined and families' involvement explained in detail. A combination of methods for selecting participants was used in most sites. Principals and/or key personnel nominated particular families and often made the first approach on our behalf. At the same time, calls for volunteers were placed in school newsletters, with families invited to indicate their interest in the project. At Ridgehaven Girls' High School, several families were nominated by the Community Liaison Officers, with the remaining participants recruited through a call for volunteers from students themselves.

The method of selection of participants in each school influenced the range of age and grade levels of students participating in the project. However, the students were chosen to reflect diversity in culture, age, social class and membership of some specific target groups. One of the innovative features of this project was the involvement of family members as co-researchers. One member of each participating family was nominated as the co-researcher. In three families where the oldest participating child was in Grade 1, the mother agreed to act as co-researcher. In one other family, where the two participating children were in Kindergarten and Grade 1, an older sister agreed to be the family member co-researcher.

3.2.2 Forms of data

The method of tracking individual students through their real world literacy contexts involved the collection of the following forms of data:

- Interview data from students, parents, teachers and other community support workers (where applicable) concerning the literacy practices of everyday life, and the role of school, home and community in the development of literacy.

- Student, parent and teacher self reporting of their own literacy practices utilising time sampling techniques.

- Observation of literacy practices at school, home and in the community utilising participant observation, self audio taping of interactions (eg. homework, story reading, playing literacy-related games, discussion of school activities). Selected family members acted as co-researchers, tape recording interactions and (in some families) taking photographs of significant literacy events (using disposable cameras).

- Audio recording of specific forms of literacy practice (eg. story reading at home and school; homework discussion at home and school; research/project work discussion and completion at home and school). This was later transcribed and subjected to discourse analysis (see methods below).

- Data on student achievement was also collected to enable comparisons to be made between high and low achieving students. These data were existing data in the form of school assessments, and teachers' records on individual students.

The procedures for data collection were first trialled in one community to test their feasibility and sensitivity. Such a trial was necessary to ensure that our procedures were non-intrusive and capable of obtaining authentic data from within homes and classrooms. This pilot phase highlighted a number of difficulties in both home and

school data collection procedures which needed to be overcome before the data collection phase could continue.

3.2.3 Data collection in families

Once the trial had been conducted, data collection was commenced within the four communities. This was conducted over a period of 6 months by a team of four research assistants. Each assistant spent an average of 1.5 to 2 days per week within one of the participating communities. This time was used for interviews with students, staff and family members; observation of classroom interactions; home visits; and meetings with family member co-researchers.

At the commencement of the Home/School phase, twenty seven families agreed to be involved in the research. From these twenty seven families, a total of thirty seven students were observed in class. Two families subsequently withdrew, both at the request of the focus student. However, these two families gave their consent for the researchers to use data collected prior to their withdrawal.

Each participating family was asked to collect a range of data. All families were asked to:

- audio tape literacy events that involved family interaction of some kind that involved literacy;
- provide contextual details for audio taped home literacy events;
- conduct an audit of home literacy resources;
- compile a log of all reading and writing activities over a specified period of time;
- photograph significant literacy events in the home (using disposable cameras supplied by the researchers).

In spite of the efforts of the research team, not all families collected all forms of data. For example, two Koori families did not audio tape home literacy interactions, and several parents declined to conduct time-sampling of their literacy activities. In addition, the disposable cameras provided to families had limited use for indoor photography, and some families preferred not to take any photographs at all. To obtain reliable audits of home literacy resources and logs of literacy activities, a range of other data collection strategies were needed. These are described in detail in the *Family Member Co-researchers* section below.

Interviews with family members were conducted, in most instances, by the Senior Research Assistant. Interviews were conducted either at school, or at home, depending on the wishes of the family. Interpreters were used to assist in interviewing four families. In five families, both parents were present for the interview. Three Koori families declined to be interviewed formally, but provided substantial information about their home literacy practices through informal conversations with members of the research team on a number of occasions. Of the remaining families, three fathers were interviewed, including one who was a single parent. Three of the mothers interviewed were single parents, and the parents in one other family separated during the time the family was involved in the research. The focus students were not present for any of the family interviews.

3.2.4 Family members as co-researchers

One member of each family was asked to act as co-researcher. In three families with young children, the mother was co-researcher, while in one other family, an older sister acted as co-researcher. In nineteen families, the co-researcher was the eldest child attending the participating school (although not necessarily the eldest child in the family). Three student co-researchers were in Year 9, seven were in Year 7, three in Grade 6, one in Grade 5, seven in Grade 4 and two in Grade 3. In four families, the

co-researcher was not the oldest sibling attending the participating school, but was the oldest sibling to be observed in class and to collect home data.

The research assistant responsible for collecting data in each site met with the child co-researchers on a regular basis (approximately weekly). In two sites, the senior research conducted the initial meeting with the co-researchers, in the presence of the Research assistant responsible for that site. This ensured consistency of instructions to co-researchers across sites. At the initial meeting, each child was given a small tape-recorder and considerable time was spent in explaining how to record successfully. Each child was given the opportunity to practise using the recorder, and to play back samples of recorded talk. Each child was also given copies of the 'Audio Recording of Literacy Activities - Cover Sheet' which was developed by the researchers. The purpose of the sheet was explained, and examples were given. Examples of the types of home literacy events which could be recorded were discussed at length, both at the initial meeting with co-researchers and at subsequent meetings. The context of each recorded event was discussed with co-researchers when they returned tapes.

Our co-researchers also collected a range of other home data, including an audit of literacy resources in the home, and self-reported time-sampling of literacy activities. Audits of home literacy resources were conducted in a number of ways. Some students completed the audit form developed by the researchers for the purpose. Students who had difficulty in completing this form were asked to draw a map of their home and then describe the literacy resources in each room or area of the house to the research assistant. Alternatively, students were asked to take an imaginary 'walk' around their home, describing the literacy resources room by room. The descriptions were audio taped and later transcribed. These methods were adapted from the work of Denny Taylor (1983).

A flexible approach to data collection was also necessary to obtain reliable time sampling of literacy activities. Four students (all secondary) successfully completed the time sampling sheet developed by the researchers. However, most students unable to complete this task and instead were interviewed informally on two separate occasions to recount, in detail, all of their activities over the 24 hour period of the previous day. Requiring students to recall all activities in this time span ensured that literacy activities were not forgotten or overlooked.

Co-researchers were also asked to obtain a time sampling of the literacy activities of one parent over a period of twenty four hours. Some parents completed the time sampling sheet, but for most families these data were obtained through the co-researcher interviewing one parent about their literacy activities over a 24 hour period. This was usually done after the child co-researcher had been interviewed in the same way by a research assistant. Interviews were audio taped and later transcribed.

3.2.5 Home literacy events

The child and family member co-researchers involved in this phase of data collection recorded a range of home literacy events. A total of one hundred and thirty home literacy events were recorded, with the number per family ranging from zero (two families) to eleven (one family).

Families were asked to audio tape at least one homework event. Most families did so, with the number of recorded homework interactions ranging from zero to seven. Several children either did not receive 'set' homework, or usually completed their homework without assistance, and therefore did not tape homework interactions. Co-researchers also audio taped discussions about children's school activities, older children 'teaching' younger siblings, and siblings playing 'schools'.

For other recordings, families were encouraged to select literacy events that were typical of the normal events of the family. They were encouraged to sample events other than 'school type' literacy. Examples of the types of literacy events recorded by families included book reading events, parent and child cooking together, reading information on signs during a family outing, children playing games together, and writing shopping lists or lists of chores to be done.

In some families, parents or children (or both) spoke *to* the tape recorder. They related to the researcher as a (non-present) participant in the recorded event, either by providing orientation or contextual information, or by giving a 'commentary' on events as they unfolded. This occurred mainly in tape-recordings done early in this phase of the project, and did not continue after further discussion with the co-researchers.

3.2.6 Classroom observations

Classroom observations were conducted in a total of eight classrooms across the three participating primary schools. In addition, classroom observations were conducted across seven subject areas in Years 7 and 9 in the participating secondary school. A total of eighty two days of classroom observation were conducted across the four schools.

The amount of time spent in each classroom varied for a number of reasons. For example, the total number of classroom observation days is greatest for the school which was included in the pilot phase of data collection. Some schools and classes had more interruptions to regular class timetables than did other schools. Also, the frequency of use of casual teachers varied across the schools and, while some casual teachers allowed the research assistant to observe in their class, on the whole we did not observe classes when casual teachers were present. Finally, 'tracking' the selected children involved observing, in some cases, a variety of class groupings. At St Joseph's School, for example, the children spend part of each day in 'Language Groups' and the remainder of the day in their regular class groupings. These changes in groupings make it difficult to calculate the number of days spent observing particular classes and/or students.

Since the selected children were to have a 'tracer' role (as described earlier), it was not considered necessary (or possible) to conduct extensive classroom observations of each child in each participating family. Instead, one child in each family was selected for intensive and long-term observation, with day-by-day interactions between these children and their siblings and friends providing data from a large number of additional children.

A number of classroom data collection instruments were developed by the researchers for use in this phase. These included the Classroom Data Collection Guidelines, Classroom Observation Record Sheet, and Classroom Observation Summary Sheet. Each instrument proved effective and manageable, although constructing field notes of the complexity required was not an easy task to master.

The pilot phase of data collection included training three research assistants, each of whom conducted classroom observations in one school one to two days per week, met regularly with child co-researchers, and conducted teacher interviews. The Senior Research Assistant conducted classroom observations in the fourth school, as well as conducting parent interviews at each of the four schools. This arrangement ensured continuity within each site as well as comparability across sites.

Field notes constructed during classroom observations were detailed and complex. One full day's observation in classrooms typically yielded 20-35 pages of such notes. The purpose of the Classroom Observation Summary Sheet was to reduce this 'raw' data as a preliminary phase of analysis. In addition to constructing field notes, research

assistants collected copies of artefacts used or produced by the participating students during observed classroom sessions.

Each of the participating teachers was also interviewed at a time and place convenient to them. Interviews were conducted by the research assistant responsible for data collection in each site. An interview schedule developed by the researchers served as the basis of each interview, with additional questions relevant to the specific circumstances of each class or teacher. Interviews were, in most instances, tape recorded and later fully transcribed.

3.3 Data analysis

In Phase 2 of our research two distinctly different (but complementary) methods of data analysis were used: qualitative and interpretive analysis of a variety of data, and detailed quantitative and qualitative discourse analysis utilising the method of 'cross case' analysis. The interpretive analysis involved the use of the constant comparative method as in the Innovative Practices phase and which is described in detail in a number of our publications (eg. Cairney, Lowe & Sproats, 1995).

The discourse analysis used in this phase of the research was designed to take account not only of the moment-to-moment interactions in classrooms and families, but also the broader social and literate contexts in which these interactions occur. It draws on a concept of discourse that combines a focus on the literacy practices engaged in by members of specific groups, the particular models and understandings of literacy constructed by group members, and a critical-linguistic focus on the actions and interactions through which these understandings are constructed. As Fairclough (1989) pointed out:

> ... in seeing language as discourse and social practice, one is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures (p.26).

The discourse analysis employed a modified form of 'cross case' analysis and used all the qualitative data collected, as well as transcripts of language interactions in the varied literacy contexts outlined above. This analysis was essential to identify the matches and mismatches in the discourse patterns and literacy practices of school and community contexts. This form of analysis was adapted from the work of Green and Wallat (1981), Bloome (1986) and Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993). The method required the careful analysis of transcripts of literacy interactions in association with other forms of data, and yielded both qualitative and quantitative interpretations. In the sections that follow, the procedures used in conducting the discourse analysis are described in detail.

3.3.1 Discourse Analysis Procedures

The first step in the discourse analysis process involved *detailed observation and collection of audio tape data* of a broad range of 'literacy events' (in both home and school contexts).

The second step was to *construct Event Maps* representing ways members of the group engaged in literacy over time. These maps were constructed by asking a series of questions (see following section) about the unfolding activity among members participating in the literacy event. The purpose of *Event Maps* was to identify the full range of literacy practices engaged in by participating students both at home and at school, as well the texts used and/or produced during learning activities, and the purposes for engaging in literacy events.

The third step was to prepare a *domain analysis* (Spradley, 1980) of the event maps to identify the range of activities used as the participants engaged in literacy and the way this activity was shaped by the discourse. The purpose of the domain analysis was to identify patterns in the data by "going beyond mere descriptions of behaviour and things to discovering the cultural meaning of that behaviour" (Spradley, 1980, p.86). Domains are categories of cultural meaning that include smaller categories linked by a single semantic relationship. Steps involved in making a *domain analysis* include identifying cover terms, searching the data for included terms, and specifying the semantic relationship linking these terms.

The fourth step was to *identify from the observed literacy events 'cycles of activity'* (after Zaharlick & Green, 1991) that occurred over time, such as a sequence of literacy events concerning the completion of a project at home or the viewing of a series of television programs and associated reading and writing intertextually linked.

The fifth step involved the preparation of *transcripts* (see section *Constructing and analysing transcripts*) for each *key literacy event* (eg. a lesson on spelling; a homework session) or *'cycle of activity'*.

The final step was to *identify key events or cycles of activity* that were significant in the formation and shaping of school knowledge and success. This involved identifying the 'telling cases' that enabled us to see what counts as literacy in classrooms and families. This involved the careful analysis of the ways in which events were framed by teachers and parents, the norms and expectations for participation, and the roles and relationships involved with particular types of literacy use and learning. This analysis involved asking a series of questions (see section *Constructing and analysing transcripts*) about the unfolding activity among members participating in the literacy event: who can say or do what, with whom, when, where, for what purpose, under what conditions, in what ways, and with what outcomes? (Spradley, 1980; Zaharlick & Green, 1991).

The ultimate purpose of these discourse analyses was to identify the ways in which language and literacy practices shape learning in school and community contexts. These data then allowed us to describe in detail specific forms of matches and mismatches between the literacy and language of home and school. The final form of analysis conducted in this phase was a series of qualitative and quantitative comparisons of outcomes data for students, and data concerning matches and mismatches in literacy practices from school to community.

3.3.2 Constructing and analysing transcripts

A key element of data collection and analysis in this phase of the research was the construction of transcripts from observations in classrooms, homes and community contexts. Fieldnotes and audio taped interactions formed the basis of these transcripts.

From the complete set of audio taped home literacy interactions, approximately one quarter were selected for complete transcription and analysis. Selections were made on the basis of a number of criteria. First, interactions that showed a clear and explicit link to an identified classroom 'cycle of activity' were selected. Second, interactions which revealed other links to school events or artefacts were selected. Finally, additional interactions were selected to ensure that a broad range of families were represented, and that the full range of 'school-like' and 'non school like' literacy events were included.

Interpreting transcripts involves asking questions about what participants need to know and understand to participate appropriately in the literacy event. The questions addressed in this study were adapted from the work of the Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group and included:

Questions about the participants and the roles and relationships they construct: *(Who can say or do what, with whom,)*
Who are the participants represented in the transcript?
What role/s do they adopt?
What relationships are evident between participants?

Questions about time and space: *(when, where,)*
When does the event take place?
Where does the event take place?
Where does this event 'fit' in the home or school learning context of the participants?

Questions about the conditions for communicating and interacting: *(under what conditions, in what ways,)*
In what ways do the participants interact?
What are the sanctioned ways of participating?
What 'rules' govern the actions and interactions of the participants?
How do the norms and expectations for participating change over time?

Questions about goals and purposes: *(for what purposes,)*
What (if any) is the stated purpose of the event?
What implicit goals or purposes are evident in the actions and interactions of the participants?

Questions about the outcomes of the interaction: *(and with what outcomes?)*
What outcome/s are evident in this event?
What outcomes are expected?
What knowledge is constructed or privileged?

Questions about links between home and school contexts:
What (if any) are the links between home and school contexts made explicit by the participants?
What implicit links are evident in the actions and interactions of participants?
In what ways is learning in this event supported or constrained by learning in other contexts?

4. Results

4.1 Discourse analysis of home and school literacy practices

One of the objectives of the project was to identify matches and mismatches between the literacy practices of home and school, and to explore how these may impact on students' school success. In effect, we attempted to understand how learning in one context may support as well as constrain learning in other contexts. In our analyses of literacy events, we examined the spoken discourse practices at the level of interaction unit as well as at the level of event. Using cross-case analysis, we then searched for patterns in discourse structures across events and contexts.

The discourse analyses presented below were designed to investigate a number of key questions about literacy practices at home and at school in order to identify and explore specific types of matches and mismatches. In the rest of this paper, we address two of these questions in an attempt to explain how differences in discourse practices impact on students' literacy learning. These questions were:

- In what types of interactional structures are literacy-related events embedded in home and school contexts?
- How do different interactional structures and ways of participating in literacy events construct, and become constructed by, different views of literacy?

First, we will describe the major types of interactional structures evident in the different contexts included in this research, as well as provide examples of each. Second, we

will examine the way in which different discourse practices and norms for participation contribute to the construction of multiple views of literacy.

A total of fifty literacy events, audio-recorded by research assistants in classrooms or co-researchers in families, were fully transcribed and analysed. These were systematically chosen (as described above) from more than eighty days observation in classrooms (not all of which was audio-recorded) and approximately one hundred and thirty recorded home literacy events. The twenty five home transcripts and equal number of classroom transcripts represent the range of classrooms and families involved in this study. Key literacy events in classrooms were selected for transcription and analysis on the basis of two criteria. First, that they were representative of the discourse and interaction patterns observed in the particular classroom throughout the study. Second, that they helped to make visible the roles of the teachers and students in constructing knowledge and opportunities to learn: that is, they were 'telling cases' (Dixon & Green, 1992).

Home literacy interactions selected for transcription and analysis were more problematic. First, since families (and in particular child co-researchers) chose what they would record, we could not be sure that the recorded interactions were representative of literacy events in each family. Nevertheless, we could and did ensure that the interactions we transcribed were representative of the full range of literacy events recorded by all families in the study. We also ensured that, within the selected interactions, all families who audio-recorded events were represented. Second, the selected interactions make visible how particular parents and children construct knowledge and opportunities to learn in their particular home contexts. We cannot generalise from the small number of families in this study to suggest that the interactions presented here represent all of the ways in which families interact in literacy events. However, our families came from a broad range of cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds, and therefore represent multiple and diverse home contexts.

4.2 Interactional structures

Our attempts to identify the major interactional structures in which literacy events were embedded in home and school contexts builds on the work of several other researchers (eg. Green & Wallat, 1981; Collins & Green, 1991; Gutierrez, 1994) who have examined how patterns of activity and 'ways of participating' are constructed in classrooms. In particular, we have drawn on the work of Collins and Green (1991), who emphasised the situated nature of social interactions, and Gutierrez (1994) who used the notion of 'scripts' as "a way of describing organized interaction in order to better understand what is being done and how" (p.337).

Five major interactional structures were identified in the analyses of transcripts of literacy events in this study. These five structures differed in terms of the roles and relationships constructed by participants, as well as the norms and expectations for participation. We have extended Gutierrez' concept of 'scripts' to refer to patterned ways of participating in literacy-related events in homes and classrooms. The five interactional structures or scripts identified in this study were: the 'Exposition' script, the 'Recitation' script, the 'Elicitation' script, the 'Responsive' script, and the 'Collaborative' script. In what follows, each of these scripts is described, with examples drawn from home and classroom transcripts.

4.2.1 The Exposition Script

What we have called the 'Exposition' script refers to interactional units in which one participant (usually an adult) initiated an extended speaking turn in which the role of other participant(s) was passive and implied. Interactions of this type could be either organisational or instructional. Interactional units of this type were found in only three

of the classrooms studied. Examples of the Exposition script were found in audio-recorded home literacy events from only one family. This does not suggest that the Exposition script did not occur in interactions in other families, only that it was not found in any other audio-recorded literacy events.

Transcript 1, which is part of a longer transcript constructed from an audio-recording of a Year 7 English lesson, exemplifies the Exposition script. Students had read a novel titled *Freaky Friday* in which the main character, a young girl, had "swapped places" with her mother. In this particular 'lesson', the teacher informed the students that she was going to show them a video, and explained that she wanted students to identify the "themes" or "messages" or "lessons in life" portrayed in the video. The teacher began the particular section of the interaction (reproduced in the transcript below) by specifying the form of written response that the task required ("you are going to write points"), but did not clearly explain what information was to be written.

Transcript 1: The 'Freaky Friday' transcript - Year 7.

096	T:	Now
097		what you are going to do is
098		you are going to write points.
099		What you are going to do
100		as we watch the film
101		each time you think you have learnt a lesson
102		from the film
103		I want you to write down
104		the lesson you have learnt.
105		what is the lesson in life
106		that I am learning from this story.
107		Is that clear to you?
108		So it might mean something like -
109		oh well
110		I don't want to tell you
111		I want you to tell me.
112		I want you to think about it
113		as you listen and watch
114		I want you to write down
115		anything you learn
116		lessons in life.
117		They have to be general
118		not like a boy should always
119		you know, like
120		don't talk specifically about the character
121		but say what are the general lessons that you learn.
122		Is that clear?
123		Any questions?
124	S:	Like what....
125	T:	I don't want to tell you
126		because it will be too easy.

In the section of transcript reproduced above, the teacher not only specified what knowledge students were expected to 'find' in the text, but also how this knowledge was to be displayed in writing. What she did not model or make explicit was any strategy that students might use for finding the required information. At one point in the exposition, the teacher began to provide an example of an acceptable response (line 108), but then explicitly declined to do so (line 110). Examples of what would be

considered unacceptable responses, however, were given (lines 118-119). On two occasions (lines 107 & 121) the teacher asked students if the instructions were clear, but on the first occasion she left no interactional space for students to respond, and on the second occasion (when a student attempted to make a space) the teacher explicitly refused to model a strategy for engaging in the task (line 124), suggesting that this would make the task "too easy" (line 125). Thus, the teacher effectively criticised, in advance, students who could not 'find' the required knowledge and the task became not only to find the "lessons in life" but also to construct an effective methodology for doing so.

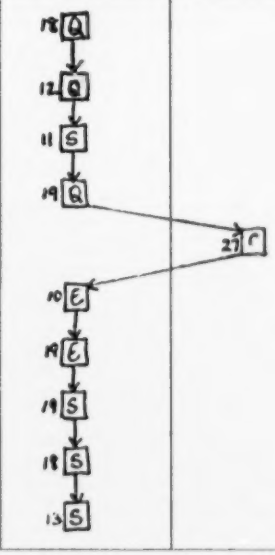
The Exposition script was found in interactions from classrooms at all grade levels involved in this research. In contrast, interactional units conforming to the Exposition script were only found in transcripts of home literacy interactions from one family, and those few that were found tended to be brief in comparison to classroom examples of this script.

4.2.2 The Recitation Script

The second interactional structure identified in this study was one in which a participant (usually a child) was expected to recite or reproduce knowledge at the request of another participant. This type of structure began with a question from one participant (usually an adult, either teacher or parent), followed by a response from another participant, and concluded by an evaluative comment from the first participant. Evaluative comments generally took the form of a confirmation or denial of the acceptability of the response (eg. 'yes', 'no', 'right'), a repetition of the preceding response, or an evaluative term (eg, 'good', 'well done'). This interactional 'script' corresponds closely to what Gutierrez (1994) called the Recitation Script, and her label has been retained.

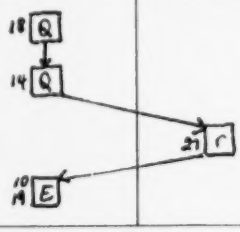
The Recitation script was the most common of all the scripts identified in classroom contexts. It typically appeared in extended question-answer sequences involving several interaction units all conforming to the same interactional structure. In some interaction units of this type, the initiating question was implicit as several students responded in turn to the same teacher question. Often, students had to work hard to 'read' the initial teacher question in the way that was intended. This is exemplified in the following transcript (Transcript 2) constructed from an audio-recording taken in a Kindergarten classroom. The teacher and children were engaged in an extended question-answer sequence related to the cover illustration of a 'big book' titled *The Jigaree*.

Transcript 2a: (Part of) The 'Jigaree' transcript - Kindergarten.

			Teacher	Students
81	T:	What did we decide		
82		that this boy was jumping on?		
83		He's not jumping on his two feet,		
84		so what did we say he's jumping on?		
85	S:	a pogo stick		
86	T:	Yeah,		
87		a pogo stick		
88		or a jumping stick.		
89		See, it's got a spring there		
90		and it springs up and down.		

The initial teacher question in this sequence began with "What did we decide...", indicating that students were to 'read' the teacher's question as relating to a similar question/answer sequence relating to the same text on a previous occasion. The teacher then discounted the response that might be predicted given students' everyday cultural knowledge - that is, that "he's jumping on his two feet", and again signaled that a previously-agreed response was required (line 84). One student then gave the required response (line 85), followed by the teacher's confirmatory remark ("yeah"), a repetition of the response ("a pogo stick"), and an alternate acceptable response ("or a jumping stick"). The teacher concluded the interaction unit with an extending comment (lines 89-90), then initiated a new interaction unit:

Transcript 2b: The 'Jigaree' transcript (continued).

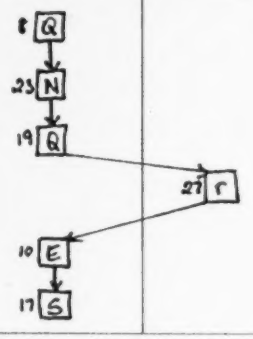
			Teacher	Students
91	T:	What about the Jigaree?		
92		What's he using to jump?		
93	S:	His feet.		
94	T:	He's using his two feet.		

The teacher question (lines 91-92) which began this interaction unit ostensibly asked students to identify what the Jigaree was "using to jump". However, implicit in the sequence unit was the requirement for students to 'read' this question (like the last) as relating to a previously-agreed response. Thus, the question was not so much "What is the Jigaree using to jump?" as "What did we agree last week that the Jigaree is using to jump?" Once again, a student provided the required response (line 93), followed by an

evaluative comment from the teacher in the form of a repetition of the response (line 94).

Although the Recitation script was most commonly found in classroom interactions, it was also evident in the transcripts of particular types of home literacy events. Specifically, it was identifiable in the interactions surrounding homework activities in many of the families in this study. The following transcript (Transcript 3) from the Pellizon family is part of a literacy event in which Stephen Pellizon (Year 4) was completing a homework sheet about the voyage of the 'Endeavour'.

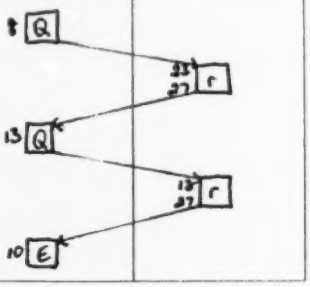
Transcript 3: The 'Endeavour' transcript - Pellizon family.

			Parent	Child
40	M:	What do you know about the Endeavour,		
41		Stephen?		
42		What do you know about it?		
43	S:	Um, (.) that it was Captain James Cook's ship?		
44	M:	Right.		
45		Well, write that down.		

4.2.3 The Elicitation Script

The third form of interactional structure identified in this study was one in which the emphasis was not just on reciting known information, but also on eliciting related knowledge. We have called this the 'Elicitation' script. This type of interactional structure was evident in many homes and classrooms in this study. The following section of transcript (Transcript 4a) was recorded on a weekend trip to visit well-known caves. The twins were exploring the caves with their mother and Aunt Helen, and chose to record their interactions as they read signs and experienced the beauty of the limetsone caves. The following extract from the transcript exemplifies the Elicitation script.

Transcript 4a: The 'Caves' transcript - Brennan family.

			Adult	Child
044	H:	What's that one called Carl?		
045	C:	Stalagmite		
046	H:	and why is it called that?		
047	C:	'cause it might touch the roof		
048	H:	good boy		

In this interaction, Carl Brennan's Aunt Helen questioned him about information that she had provided to him several minutes earlier (i.e. the names 'stalagmite' and 'stalagtite', and ways to remember which name refers to which phenomenon commonly found in caves). Helen first posed a question (line 44), to which Carl responded (line 45). However, unlike the Recitation script described above, in this interaction no explicit evaluation of the response was offered. However, an additional question was posed (line 46) which required Carl to extend or explain his first response (line 47). Helen concluded the interaction unit with an evaluative comment ("good boy").

Although almost all of the examples of the Elicitation script identified in this study were initiated and controlled by adults, there were a few examples in which children took the initiating and controlling role. The following extract (also taken from the Brennan family's 'Caves' transcript) is an example of a child-initiated Elicitation script.

Transcript 4b: The 'Caves' transcript - Brennan family.

			Adult	Child
064	C:	Hey, will they fall?		
065	H:	no		
066		they won't fall		
067	J:	how come?		
068	H:	No		
069		'cause they are attached to the roof		
070		they are hangin' on real tight		
071		[*walking down stairs*]		
072	J:	How come it lighted up?		
073	M:	because it is sensors		
074		you watch as we walk		
075	C:	what if you don't talk?		
076		will it feel ya?		
077	H:	Yes		
078		it will feel our body movements.		

In the section of transcript reproduced above, Carl Brennan initiated an interaction unit by posing a question to his Aunt (line 64). His Aunt responded (lines 65-66), followed by an extending question from Jeffery (line 67). Once again, Helen responded, this time by providing additional information related to Carl's initial question. The sequence continued, with Jeffery posing a question (line 72) to which his mother provided a response (lines 73-74). Carl then posed a question (line 75) which sought an extension of the information provided by his mother. This time, the response was provided by Helen (line 78).

4.2.4 The Responsive Script

One type of interaction which we identified in this study, but which was not common, was what we called the Responsive script. In interactions of this type, the exchange was not 'controlled' by one participant in the way that the previous scripts revealed. Rather, participants drew on each other's responses in constructing the exchange. This is exemplified in the following transcript (Transcript 5) from a Year 7 class. In this exchange, the school Librarian questioned Angela Lahoud's understanding of a text about ballet.

Transcript 5: The 'Ballet' transcript - Year 7.

			Teacher	Students
98	L:	Which words don't you understand?		
99		*[Reading aloud] 'Many people had grown tired of watching ballet with fairy tale stories.'*		
100		Do you know any ballets at all?		
101		Have you heard of Swan lake?		
102	A:	No		
103	L:	The Nutcraker Suite?		
104	A:	No		
105	L:	Do you know what toe shoes are?		
106		Do you know what ballet is?		
107	A:	Yes		
108		I know what ballet is.		
109	L:	Do you see it on TV?		
110	A:	Sometimes		
111		not very often.		
112	L:	He thought people		
113		had got sick of all that		
114		with costumes		
115		and fairy tale stories		
116		so he wanted to find		
117		a new form of dance,		
118		a simple form of dance.		
119		He wanted to start		
120		a different style,		
121		break away from		
122		the old types of ballets		
123		and find a new form of dance.		
124		Try and put that in		
125		a simple sentence.		

In the exchange above, the Librarian used questioning to identify and respond to Angela's prior knowledge of the topic in order to make the text comprehensible so that Angela could complete the task. This type of responsiveness was found only in interactions involving two or three participants. It was not evident in whole class or large group interactions.

4.2.5 The Collaborative Script

In contrast to the linear nature of the interactional structures described above, there was one interactional structure identified in this study which was more circular in nature. In this type of interaction there was less emphasis on question-answer sequences and participants tended to build on each other's contributions. We have called this type of interactional structure the Collaborative Script.

The Collaborative Script was more commonly found in home literacy interactions than classroom interactions. Of those classroom interactions which conformed to this script, most were between only two or three participants, usually all students. For example, in the transcript below (Transcript 6), Joanne Edmonds and her mother collaboratively constructed a list of the chores that each needed to do.

Transcript 6: The 'Chores List' transcript - Edmonds family.

01	M:	OK
02		I have to do David Jones bake recipe
03		that's on my list
04	J:	yes yes
05		that's under Mum
06		and I have to do cello practice
07	M:	and try and give a couple of minutes to get some tea
08		fill that up again
09	J:	yes
10		and piano and-
11		what do I still have to do?
12	M:	bath the dog
13	J:	that's under me
14		[*writing*] bath the dog
15		I have to tidy my room
16	M:	bake a banana cake
17	J:	me [*writing*] a banana cake

There were few examples of the Collaborative script found in classroom interactions. In classrooms, interaction units were most often begun by teachers - when a child attempted to begin an interaction unit it was usually 'read' by the teacher as interactionally divergent, and the child was either censured or ignored. In home contexts, both parents and children commonly initiated interaction units, and parents did not 'read' children's initiations as divergent.

In classroom contexts, sequence units were almost always initiated by teachers. This meant that, in practice, only teachers had the 'authority' to shift the focus of interaction or event. If a child attempted to shift the focus of the interaction by beginning a new sequence unit, this was usually treated by the teacher as thematically divergent.

Students rarely adopted the role of 'teacher' in the classroom, although they often did so at home, particularly in interactions with younger siblings. On the few observed occasions when students were given the role of 'teacher' in a classroom context, this was usually procedural rather than actual.

4.3 Multiple constructions of literacy

The second key question explored in our discourse analyses of home and school literacy events was: How do different interactional structures and ways of participating in literacy events construct, and become shaped and in fact constructed by, different conceptions of literacy?

The data presented in the previous chapter, as well as in the sections above, show that participants in this study (students, teachers, and family members) adopted different roles and relationships, norms and expectations, and ways of participating in literacy-related events. These three elements contributed to the construction of differing views of literacy, and differing notions of what constitutes literate action.

Four distinct 'constructions of literacy' were identified through the discourse analyses in this study: literacy as knowledge, literacy as performance, literacy as negotiated construction of meaning, and literacy as 'doing school'. In what follows, each of these constructions or views of literacy is explored and illustrated with examples drawn from the transcript data.

4.3.1 Literacy as Knowledge

One set of interactions in this study was charactised by social and linguistic factors which contributed to the construction of a particular view of literacy that is best described as 'literacy as knowledge'. In these interactions, one participant (usually an adult) fulfilled the role of *monitor of knowledge*, while other participant(s) were accountable for reproducing knowledge to participate successfully in the literacy event.

In the following interaction from a Year 1 classroom (Transcript 7), the teacher and students (including Carl and Jeffery Brennan) were engaged in an extended question-answer sequence related to the text *Lester and Clyde Run Scared*. The teacher initiated all of the questions in the exchange and acted as arbiter of the children's responses. The children were required to participate by displaying their knowledge, not only of the text itself, but of the habits of creatures called 'feral cats'.

Transcript 7: The 'Feral Cat' transcript - Year 1.

56	T:	Carl
57		what's a feral cat?
58	C:	(*inaudible*)
59	T:	How did it get there?
60	C:	it got lost
61	T:	it could have
62	S:	it might have been hunting food
63	T:	They might have let it free to hunt food but-
64	S:	It might have been that human's cat
65	T:	yes
66		it might not have been *that* human's cat
67		but at some stage it might have been a human's cat.
68		What do you think the humans had done to it?
69	S:	(*inaudible*)
70	T:	I think the humans might have had the cat at their house.
71		Do they have the cat at their house anymore?
72	Ss:	Nooo
73	T:	Where is the cat living now Mike?
74	M:	At the pond
75	T:	at the pond
76		does anybody love that cat anymore?
77	Ss:	No

Some of the knowledge that the students were required to produce in this event was directly related to the text (eg. "Where is the cat living now, Mike?" "At the pond." "Does anybody love that cat anymore?" "No."). Other knowledge, however, was drawn from students' everyday knowledge of feral cats (eg. "It might have been hunting food." "It might have been that human's cat.") Thus, the focus of this particular literacy event was not simply to construct meaning from the text, but to reproduce knowledge about feral cats.

The 'AMES homework' transcript reproduced below (Transcript 8) is an example of the view of literacy as knowledge taken from the transcript of a home literacy event. Fatima Younnis (Year 7) was engaged in assisting her adult aunt to complete a 'homework' task for the English language class she was attending at the local Adult Migrant English Service.

Transcript 8: The 'AMES homework' transcript - Fatima Younnis and her aunt.

01	A:	[*Reads*] My name is Mulla. I came from Syria. I live in Bankstown. I have been in Australia 10 years. Australia is very nice and I em (sic) happy here-
02	F:	I <u>am</u> happy
03	A:	I am happy here. I have not (*inaudible*) I study English in Bankstown. I am ea (..) sy (.)
04	F:	Australia, Australia is very nice and I am happy here.
05	A:	Is very nice?
06	F:	Nice, yep, and I am happy here. I have no children.
07	A:	[*writing*](.) have (.) no (.) children
08	F:	Have is A, H-A, A, A, no, A.
09	A:	I have no children
10	F:	children, children is spelt C-H-I-L-D-R-E-N. No, it is all wrong. C-H-I, I, I, L-D-R-E-N. No, E-N, not A. Children, full stop.

In this interaction, the role of *monitor of knowledge* was adopted by Fatima, while her aunt was required to display her knowledge in order to participate in the event. Displaying knowledge on this occasion involved spelling words correctly.

The construction of *literacy as knowledge* was most common among families from non-English speaking backgrounds, particularly when adults from these families assisted children with homework tasks.

This view of literacy as knowledge was closely aligned with, but not exclusive to, interactional structures which emphasised the authority of one participant (usually an adult) and was reflected in the Recitation and Elicitation scripts described in the first section of this chapter.

4.3.2 Literacy as Performance

A second set of interactions analysed in this project was characterised by a view or construction of literacy that we have called 'literacy as performance'. In these interactions, one or more participants (usually children) were held accountable (usually by adults) for demonstrating a certain level of proficiency in a literacy-related task. The focus of these interactions was on the performance of the task, and in some instances the adult acted as arbiter of the quality of the performance.

The following exchange has been reconstructed from detailed field notes. Stuart Jennings (Year 1) and some of his classmates had just completed a worksheet in which they had to 'fill in' the number preceding each of the numbers on the page, then colour in the pictures on the worksheet. The teacher apparently judged that Stuart had not done the task well enough, even though all his numbers were correct. The following exchange took place:

Field note excerpt 1: The 'Beautiful Work' exchange - Year 1.

01	T:	Stuart, can you see the difference between that and that? I would do that again, so it was beautiful. Do you like beautiful work?
02		*Stuart nods.*
03	T:	Can you fix that up?
04		*Stuart shakes head.*
05	T:	Let's get another sheet for you. Stuart, don't forget the lines. We need to keep inside the lines so drawings look beautiful.
06	S:	I think it's better when I do the drawing.
07	T:	That's why you have to be careful with other people's drawings. *Teacher turns his attention to another child, then comments:*
08	T:	He's got some great ideas on colouring in.
09	S:	And I don't?

In this exchange, there was no recognition of what Stuart counted as "doing beautiful work". The teacher's judgement of the standard of Stuart's performance was based solely on the teacher's criteria - keeping inside the lines. To Stuart, however, having the opportunity to produce his own picture to be coloured in counted as part of the performance. When the teacher commented on another child's work (line 08), Stuart's response ("And I don't") showed that he was aware of the differences between his own view of "doing beautiful work" and the teacher's view. Not surprisingly, the teacher's view prevailed.

The construction of literacy as performance was evident not only in many classroom transcripts, but also in some recorded family interactions. Vareen and McDermott (1986) recognised this in their research into families' homework practices and reported that "the presence of school in the family kitchen is apparent in the way members spotlight the child's performance. Even more striking is the fact that the specific talk that is generated as part of the homework scene is structured, as school talk is structured, to isolate individual competence displays" (p. 199). This is evident in the following transcript (Transcript 9), in which John Zakos (Year 4) and his mother use the school newsletter for reading practice.

Transcript 9: The 'School Newsletter' transcript - Zakos family.

41	M:	okay, what's next?
42	J:	play equipment
43	M:	construction
44	J:	construction after much playing and
45	M:	planning
46	J:	planning and found (.)
47	M:	fund raising
48	J:	fund raising and a (.)
49	M:	approximate
50	J:	approximate target date of them
51	M:	of term
52	J:	of term one (.) nineteen ninety seven has been set of- for
53	M:	for the
54	J:	for the inst-
55	M:	installation
56	J:	installation for the
57	M:	of the new
58	J:	of the new play equipment.

In the exchange above, Mrs Zakos provides support for John's reading of the school newsletter text by simply telling him unknown words. As in the 'Listen to Mama' transcript (Transcript 9) from the Zakkouri family, there is no attempt to construct meaning from the text. However, unlike the 'Listen to Mama' transcript, the emphasis here is on the successful performance of the task, rather than holding the child accountable for producing the knowledge required to engage in the task.

There was also evidence of the construction of literacy as performance in some family literacy events that did not involve homework activities. In the transcript below (Transcript 10), for example, Mrs Brennan displayed this view of literacy in the way that she engaged in bedtime storybook reading with her three young sons.

Transcript 10: The 'Percy Pig' transcript - Brennan family.

24	M:	*"Chase him" shouted Dad. We tried our best but Percy was too quick and got away....*
25		*the crowd got in our way.*
26		*"Stop that pig" we yelled, but nobody helped us. Some people were too surprised. Others thought it was a joke. We chased him past the horses. We chased him past the farm machinery. We nearly caught him in the hall, but a pusher got in the way.* *Percy went through the sideshows into the haunted house. We had to buy a ticket. It was spooky inside and Percy ran out .* *"He's heading for the ring" gasped Dad. We could not grab him in time. We were out of breath, but Percy had joined the grand parade of champions. Percy got beside some cows and calves. He trotted along as if he belonged there, but pigs don't go in the grand parade, even the champion.* *"Now who...*
27		*we're*
28		*in trouble" said Dad. Thousands of people were laughing. Our faces were red. Then everyone started clapping. They looked...*
29		*they liked*
30		*the only pig in the grand parade. Percy was happy. He felt ike a champion at last.*
31	J:	Wow
32	M:	That's it.
33	J:	Can you read (*inaudible*)?
34	M:	No.
35	J:	Please.
36	M:	No,
37		it's time to go to sleep.

In this literacy event, Mrs Brennan simply read the story aloud to the children. She did not allow any questions or interjections during the reading and, despite Jeffery's obvious enjoyment of the story (line 31) would not engage in any discussion of the story after she had finished reading (lines 34 & 36).

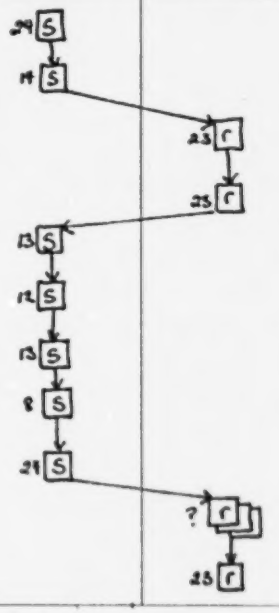
4.3.3 Literacy as negotiated construction of meaning

The third distinct view or construction of literacy identified in this study can best be called 'literacy as negotiated construction of meaning'. Interactions of this type usually conformed to either the Responsive or the Collaborative script, although the focus of the exchange was more on achieving the task at hand than following any particular interactional routine. In these interactions, each participant had the right to contribute to

the exchange at will. Students, for example, were not required to raise their hands and wait to be nominated by the teacher before speaking, nor did adults control the interaction by naming speakers.

The following two extracts from an extended transcript clearly illustrate this particular construction of literacy. The extracts are taken from a classroom literacy event in which a Year 4 teacher was leading a discussion about the cover illustration of a book called *Which Habitat?* In the first section of the transcript (Transcript 11a), the teacher signposted the structure of the exchange by making a statement (line 57) rather than posing a question. Students responded to the teacher's lead by offering responses (lines 58, 59, 66 & 67) without being named or otherwise nominated by the teacher.

Transcript 11a: The 'Which Habitat?' transcript - Year 4.

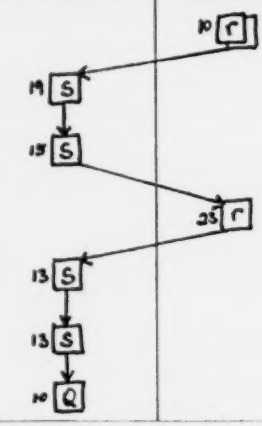
			Teacher	Students
56	T:	This here,		
57		I wonder whether its a, a, ..		
58	S:	ocean		
59	S:	land, land.		
60	T:	or it might be a bird		
61		a long long way away.		
63		And this bird here certainly-		
64		look at the feet on that bird		
65		there.		
66	Ss:	[*talk at once*]		
67	S:	.....it's like a duck.		

However, it was not only the structure of the exchange that alerted students to the negotiated nature of this exchange: the teacher's use of "I wonder" and "it might be" signalled that 'correct' responses in this exchange were negotiable. In lines 63-65, the teacher lead the students to consider the evidence presented by the illustration in suggesting possible responses.

In the next section of this exchange (Transcript 11b), students continued to offer suggestions without being nominated (lines 73 & 80) and the teacher continued to verbalise her reasoning (lines 76 & 81) rather than pose questions. Both the structure of the interaction (in which students were permitted to initiate contributions without being nominated by the teacher, and the teacher did not evaluate every student response) and the nature of the participants responses contributed to the view of literacy as negotiated construction of meaning.

Transcript 11b: The 'Which Habitat?' transcript (continued).

			Teacher	Students
73	Ss:	yes, it swims		
75	T:	It swims.		
76		So it must be a bird that lives near water and perhaps feeds from the water		
80	S:	fish		
81	T:	near where it lives.		
82		From fish.		
83		So if you look at its beak it tells you that it's a water-going bird, doesn't it.		



The view of literacy as negotiated construction of meaning was also evident in audio-recorded literacy events in a small number of families. One example of this is in the following section of transcript from the Jennings family (Transcript 12). This interaction is part of a home literacy event in which Tara Jennings was writing a list of groceries the family needed to buy. All four members of the family - Mr and Mrs Jennings, Tara (Year 5) and Stuart (Year 1) - contributed to the list as they sat at the dinner table. At one point in the exchange, Mrs Jennings noticed the way in which Tara had written 'yogurt' on the list.

Transcript 12: The 'Yoghurt' transcript - Jennings family.

07	M:	hey, did you write 'spread' too Stuart?
08	S:	no
09	T:	no I did
10	M:	I was going to say it looked like two different people's writing, and Tara you can't spell 'yoghurt'
11	F:	that's all right, I can't spell 'yoghurt' either
12	M:	well I don't think the companies can spell 'yoghurt' cause 'yoghurt' always used to have an 'h' in it, now they've stopped putting it in
13	F:	(inaudible)
		Tara laughs.
14	T:	yeah.
15	M:	well how do you say it?
16	T:	yo-gurt. Yoghurt.
17	F:	*(Sings)* Yo-o-gurt.
18	M:	well it used to have an 'h' in it.
19	T:	(inaudible) a yoghurt in here so I can't see. Oh yes there is
20	M:	yeah, there's plenty of containers
21	T:	(*reads from container*) Y-O-G-U-R-T
22	F:	so you reckon if you looked it up in the Macquarie dictionary it'd give you an option with 'h' do you?
23	M:	no, I don't think it probably would
24	T:	it doesn't have an 'h'
25	M:	no it used to have
26	T:	an 'h' there?
27	M:	it used to. Go and find that old dictionary of - that was Grandad's.

Mrs Jennings' comment that Tara had made a spelling error (line 10) prompted an admission from Mr Jennings that he, too, was not a proficient speller (line 11). Mrs Jennings then questioned whether "the companies" knew how to spell because the spelling of the word had changed from 'y-o-g-h-u-r-t' to 'y-o-g-u-r-t' (line 12). What followed was a negotiation of ways to confirm the correct spelling of the word, including checking the actual containers and conculting a number of dictionaries. Through this exchange, a common view of the correct spelling of the word was negotiated among the participants. Exchanges such as this one, in which language was discussed as an object that could be held up for scrutiny, were common in the Jennings home.

4.3.4 Literacy as 'Doing School'

The final construction of literacy evident within the contexts described in this study was a view or construction that we have called 'literacy as doing school'. This is similar to what Street (1995) meant when he noted that "the way in which rules for the engagement of participants as teachers and learners are continuously asserted and reinforced within practices supposedly to do simply with using and talking about literacy: while apparently simply giving instructions about handling a text for instance, teachers and parents are also embedding relations of hierarchy, authority and control" (p. 114).

This particular construction of literacy was only evident in classrooms, and was characterised by an emphasis on procedural displays of classroom competence rather than on the literacy demands of the task. For example, in the following extract from an audio-recorded event in a Year 1 classroom (Transcript 13), the teacher and children were preparing for a reading of the book *Lester and Clyde Run Scared.* It is evident from the transcript that the teacher's focus was on the way in which the children were sitting, rather than on talking about or focusing on literacy.

Transcript 13: The 'Enjoying a New Story' transcript - Year 1.

010		Christopher read it for us
011	C:	Lester and Clyde Running Scared
012	T:	Run Scared
013		This is part two
014		and you will notice it is very similar to the other one
015		and the ending is very different - some very different things happen.
016		Are you ready?
017	Ss:	yes
018	T:	Are you comfortable?
019		Are your legs crossed and your hands in your lap?
020		Remembering when we are enjoying a new story we are not talking about it.

Interactions such as the one above were common in all of the classrooms in the primary schools in this study, but were not noted in the secondary school. Kindergarten and Year 1 children, in particular, frequently encountered this construction of literacy as they became socialised into school ways of participating and interacting.

The ramifications, in terms of classroom patterns of authority and opportunities to learn, of the construction of literacy as 'doing school' are discussed in detail in the final section of this chapter.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4.3.5 Constructions of literacy as situated definitions

The constructions of literacy presented above are not operational definitions in the sense that they can be used to guide instruction or research. Rather, they are situated definitions that were apparent in the ways that students, teachers and family members interacted in literacy events in everyday life in this study. Collins and Green (1992) explored situated definitions of learning in classroom settings and cautioned that:

> The existence of such definitions of learning within a group does not, however, ensure that all members of the group have knowledge of the ways in which this term is being defined. Depending on the roles and relationships among members, some members may not access or construct the knowledge needed to participate appropriately in the social world of the group. In addition, given past experiences, a particular member may interpret the actions of others in ways that do not reflect an understanding of the definition held by other members of the group (p. 79).

What happens when one member of a group does not participate 'appropriately' in the social world of the group was explored within the project but is not reported here (see Cairney & Ruge, 1997 for a full discussion).

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this project was to explore differences in the language and literacy practices of schools, families and community groups. In particular, it was designed to examine matches and mismatches between the discourse practices of home and school and the impact that any differences have on students' school success.

As part of this project, we sought to examine current promising attempts to create school curricula and learning environments that meet the needs of specific students and which facilitate effective partnerships between home, school and community. In doing so, we conducted intensive case studies of four schools, one secondary and three primary, which were identified as adopting innovative strategies to acknowledge and respond to differences in the language and literacy practices of the communities they serve. Three of the schools had a large proportion of students from non-English speaking backgrounds, while the fourth had a significant proportion of Aboriginal students. Through detailed data collection and analysis procedures, we have provided information about the school and community context; the preconditions or critical events which precipitated the introduction of innovative practices; details of curricular, pedagogical and community participation initiatives in each school; and evidence of the impact key initiatives have had on language, literacy and learning. Finally, we have identified key elements that contributed to the development of innovative practices in each of the case study schools.

In addition, we have sought to identify matches and mismatches in discourse practices in home and school contexts. This involved detailed description and discourse analysis of the school literacy practices of students (primary and secondary) from twenty seven families, as well as parallel description and discourse analysis of the home and community literacy practices of the students and their families. Through the involvement of students and family members as co-researchers, we explored literacy practices in a range of contexts, paying particular attention to 'school' and 'non-school' literacy practices, and the spoken discourse practices within which they are embedded.

Determining the impact of mismatches between home and school on students' school success is a complex matter. The degree to which any individual student's home literacy practices and discourses represents a mismatch with the mythical 'typical' school literacy practices and discourses varies along multiple axes, including the discourse structures, patterns of authority and interaction, and constructions of literacy

encountered by the child at home and at school. In addition, the consequences of such mismatches in terms of student achievement vary along multiple axes, including teacher/parent notions of 'school success', degrees of 'empowerment', and the dominance of school literacy in home contexts. In short, we found that there is no single or simple answer to the question of how matches and mismatches in home and school literacy practices impact on students' school success. We did, however, identified two key issues that need to be considered in detail in any attempts to provide answers to this question. The first relates to the difficulties that students may encounter in negotiating school literacy, while the second relates to the notion of school literacy as empowerment.

5.1 Negotiating 'school literacy'

Successfully negotiating 'school literacy' involves learning the norms and expectations, and ways of participating, that are valued and reproduced in school contexts. In most discussions of the impact of literacy on students' school success, there is an implicit assumption that 'school literacy' is best - that what students learn at school is somehow 'better' than what they learn at home. This is reflected in Street's (1995) question: "among all of the different literacies practised in the community, the home, and the workplace, how is it that the variety associated with schooling has come to be the defining type, not only to set the standard for other varieties but to marginalize them, to rule them off the agenda of literacy debate? Non-school literacies have come to be seen as inferior attempts at the real thing, to be compensated for by enhanced schooling" (p. 106). The implication is, therefore, that any student who can competently negotiate 'school literacy' will achieve school success. Yet, this is not always the case. In some of the families in this study, the 'school literacy' that children encountered was more restricted than their home literacy experiences.

On the basis of much previous research we might hypothesise that, if there are indeed matches and mismatches in home and school discourse practices, and that middle-class students are those most likely to achieve academic success, then middle-class families might be expected to show the greatest degree of 'match' between home and school. In our sample of families, the students who were most academically successful were those whose family literacy practices reproduced school literacy practices. Those who were less academically successful did not share the home dominance of school literacy. Some, like the Jennings family, shared the home dominance of school literacy to a large extent, but their home literacy practices were not always recognised or acknowledged in school contexts. This contributed to the teacher's view of Stuart Jennings as a child who was "old before his time". Other families, like the Brennans, actively resisted the dominance of school literacy by explicitly challenging the types of 'school literacy' in which their children engaged. What was common to all these families was a preparedness to use literacy in multiple forms, to use talk about and 'play' with language, and to reflect on language and literacy as it was used for varied purposes.

Recent research on classroom interaction patterns has clearly shown that classrooms offer multiple and varied opportunities for learning (eg. Tuyay, Jennings & Dixon, 1995). The extent of the opportunities for learning seemed more limited at Woodgate Public School than at the other two primary schools involved in the Home/School phase, at least in the lower grades. By concentrating their efforts on making school a place where Koori students want to be, the staff may have unwittingly narrowed the opportunities for learning offered in their classrooms. Yet it could be argued that it is difficult for the school to do more. Children like Jack Melville (whose school attendance was poor, and whose parents would not or could not enforce attendance) made it difficult for the school to do more. In these cases, the school could not count on the family to support school literacy agendas.

At the same time, however, it is difficult to criticise any family for an apparent lack of support for the school if they have no grounds for believing that regular school

attendance, and even school achievement, will make any material difference to their social and economic circumstances. Ogbu's (1992) work on primary and secondary cultural differences would suggest that Aboriginal children, like children of other groups that have been dominated or repressed, face much greater difficulties than children of other minority groups. Ogbu argued that immigrant or voluntary groups interpret cultural and linguistic differences as obstacles to be overcome,whereas involuntary groups interpret these as differences to be maintained as an expression of identity. He stated that both types of minority group develop a range of educational strategies that may or may not lead to school success, but that involuntary groups have a larger proportion of strategies that will not lead to success, and therefore are the groups most likely to need culturally compatible schooling. The educational experiences of the Aboriginal children and families in this study suggest that further research in this area is needed.

5.2 'School literacy' as empowerment

This research attempted to address the question: "Why does school literacy empower some and disempower others?" Since literacy is constructed by members of groups, through their interactions, school literacy differs from school to school. While it may have many common characteristics, and be very similar across schools, we must nevertheless recognise that when we talk about school literacy we are not talking about a single 'entity' that is constant, but rather about 'literacies' which are changing and evolving. To make sense of the question above, we must therefore recognise that we are talking about the specific school literacies that particular students encounter. Thus, the school literacy that the Koori children encountered at Woodgate was different from the school literacy that Vietnamese children encountered at St Joseph's School. Whether school literacy empowers children or not is a question about the relationship between the school literacy practices that particular children encounter, and the home literacy practices of those same children. Thus, there cannot be an assumption that school literacy is constant and universally empowering to those who master it.

One important finding of this study that needs to be understood is that children from 'minority' language and cultural backgrounds are not the only ones who may find school literacy less than empowering. Many children from the dominant or mainstream culture encounter a more restricted range of literacy practices at school than the literacy practices in which they engage at home. While these children may be academically successful relative to their peers from minority backgrounds, that is they are 'good at' school literacy, their learning is nevertheless constrained by the mismatches between literacy at home and at school. For example, the school literacy that Stuart Jennings encountered certainly did not encourage him to draw on, or build on, the broad range of literacy practices in which he engaged at home. Thus, for children like Stuart, school literacy may constrain rather than empower.

In contrast, for children at St Joseph's School, school literacy tended to empower. For these children school literacy practices were transferred to home contexts via homework practices, but tended to add to home literacy practices, rather than constrain them. Similarly, the Brennan twins (whose mother approached the school when the boys began having difficulties with literacy) may have been empowered through the transference of home literacy practices and expectations to school, which overcame (to some extent) the constraining effects of the school literacy they encountered. Their teacher had described them as "twins sharing the one ability" and expressed her belief that their difficulties could not stem from home since their parents "could not be more supportive". Through their mother's intervention, the boys were given opportunities to gain additional support at school, and to use the knowledge of literacy they had gained at home, in school contexts.

One Vietnamese parent involved in this study, Mrs Le, expressed her view of literacy as empowerment when she said in an interview that she wanted her children to be able to

control their futures in a way that she could not. She explained that she was forced to work as a piece-worker in the clothing industry because she did not have the skills to "cut out the middle man". She recognised that she was constrained, both economically and socially, by her lack of English literacy skills. She saw 'school literacy' as being the means of overcoming this lack of power for her children.

"Clegg argue(d) that power is not a property held by persons, as some forms of episodic agency would have it, but that power is *relational*, and is the product of structured sets of relations among people, relations which are not attributable to or created by particular people, but are more historically, institutionally and discursively produced" (Gilbert & Low, 1994, p.7). Thus, 'empowering' students through school literacy is not simply a matter of improving students' skills in reading and writing, it is about changing the relational structures so that the whole basis of institutional power is transformed. In concrete terms, this means that empowering children like Craig (whose attempts to contribute to knowledge construction in the classroom were rejected because they constituted violations of the existing interaction patterns in the Kindergarten classroom) does not mean 'teaching' him how to interact 'appropriately' so that his knowledge will be accepted and privileged - it means accepting his knowledge regardless of how he interacts, and in so doing, changing the relational structures in which the power is based.

Cummins and Sayers (1995) argued that school-based reform will not significantly improve the academic achievement of minority group students until broader societal reforms improve their economic and social circumstances. The experiences of several children in this study would suggest that this is certainly true of Aboriginal students and their families. Children like Sarah Haynes and Emma Richards, who enjoyed considerable support for learning at home (either from their parents or other family members), are currently achieving reasonably well in comparison to their peers. Indeed, they may continue to do well throughout their primary school years. However, even in the short time that we worked with these families, circumstances arose which impacted on the girls' opportunities to learn. Sarah missed many days at school while attending the funeral of a family member on the far north coast. Emma's mother became ill and was hospitalised, leaving Emma and her eight year old sister Laura in the care of their older sisters. In both of these families there were significant matches between home and school that supported the girls' learning. The constraints on their learning did not arise so much from the mismatches between home and school as from social and economic circumstances.

Street (1995) drew attention to "the close association of literacy practices with identity, authority, and concepts of knowledge" (p. 110). The mismatches that we found between home and school literacies were not so much in terms of literacy practices, but in terms of authority and concepts of knowledge. Matches between home and school literacy events and practices allow children to develop situated expertise which enhances or supports the development of 'school literacy'. However, mismatches in home and school literacy practices (particularly in terms of authority structures and concepts of knowledge) constrain children's development of non-school literacies. School achievement may be ensured, but empowerment is not.

The findings of this study support Corson's (1991) contention that "education can routinely repress, dominate and disempower language users whose practices differ from the norms that it establishes. ... Whoever has the power to define the context and the language code that describes it is empowered; all others who accept that definition without question accept their own disempowerment in that setting" (p.236). In this study, it was not only those children who could not successfully negotiate 'school literacy' who were 'disempowered'.

It is clear from the evidence provided in this study that families and schools differ markedly in their literacy practices and values. What is also clear is that there are

significant differences amongst families in the way they define and use literacy. Thus, knowing that a student is a member of a particular subgroup (eg. a member of a socioeconomically disadvantaged family; a recent Vietnamese immigrant; a third-generation Australian-born 'native' Arabic speaker; etc.) does not entitle us to assume anything about that student's literacy practices or 'ways of participating' in the cultural practices of the group.

The findings of this project raise a number of additional questions about the relationships between home and school literacy practices. When restrictive school literacy practices are transmitted to home, what factors contribute to whether or not parents/families acquiesce? For example, why is it that Mrs Brennan intervened on behalf of her sons, while Mrs Jennings did not? Mrs Jennings reported feeling constrained by the perception that if a parent wants to speak to a teacher there must be a problem. How do parents construct their role as supporters of their children's learning? What factors influence parents' sense of self-efficacy in improving their children's educational outcomes.

Also needed is further exploration of the role that children play as mediators between home and school. Does this role differ for different groups? How do students construct the role of mediator? How do students respond to differences between home and school? Is there any evidence that children from different minority groups respond in different ways? For example, do Koori children respond to differences by clinging to home practices, while NESB children respond by embracing school practices? If so, does this support Ogbu's (1992) theory of primary and secondary cultural differences? What do 'mainstream' or 'dominant culture' children do when faced with mismatches between home and school?

The findings of this study strongly support Connell's (1994) argument that it is misleading to assume that problems in school achievement concern only a disadvantaged minority of students. Educational change is not something to be 'done to' minority groups, and effective programs cannot exist as 'add-ons' to the 'real' work of schools. What is needed is fundamental change in student-teacher-parent relationships. The key to this is the development of more effective partnerships between homes and schools.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

References

Au, K. (1993). *Literacy Instruction in Multicultural Settings.* Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

Au, K. (1995). Multicultural Perspectives on Literacy Research. *Journal of Reading Behaviour,* Vol. 27, No. 1.

Barton, D. (1994). *Literacy: An introduction to the ecology of written language.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Bloome, D. (1986). Literacy and Schooling. Norwood (NJ): Ablex.

Bloome, D. & Egan-Robertson, A. (1993). The social construction of intertextuality in classroom reading and writing lessons. *Reading Research Quarterly,* Vol. 28, No. 4.

Breen, M.P., Louden, W., Barrat-Pugh, C., Rivalland, J., Rohl, M., Rhydwen, M., Lloyd, S., and Carr, T. (1994). *Literacy in its place: Literacy practices in urban and rural communities* (Vols 1 & 2). Canberra: DEET.

Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds.* Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1986.

Cairney, T.H. (1994). Family Literacy: Moving towards new partnerships in education. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy,* Vol. 17, No. 4.

Cairney, T.H. (1995). Developing Parent Partnerships in Secondary Literacy Learning. *Journal of Reading.* Vol. 38, No. 7, pp 520-526.

Cairney, T.H., Lowe, K. & Sproats, E. (1995). *Literacy in Transition: An investigation of the literacy practices of upper primary and junior secondary schools* (Vols 1-3). Canberra: DEET.

Cairney, T.H. and Ruge, J. (1996). *Examining the impact of cultural mismatches between home and school: Coping with diversity in classrooms.* Paper presented to the American Association for Educational Research Conference, New York, 8-12 April.

Cairney, T.H. & Ruge, J. (1997). *Community Literacy Practices and Schooling: Towards effective support for students.* Sydney: DEETYA.

Cairney, T.H., Ruge, J., Buchanan, J., Lowe, K. & Munsie, L. (1995). *Developing partnerships: The home, school and community interface* (Vols 1-3). Canberra: DEET.

Coe, R. M. (1995). What Students Aren't Learning at School: Assessing students' ability to situate their discourses. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Conference, San Francisco.

Colins, E. & Green, J. (1992). Learning in classroom settings: Making or breaking a culture. In H. Marshall (Ed.), *Redefining student learning: Roots of educational change,* Norwood (NJ): Ablex.

Cummins, J. (1986). Empowering minority students: A framework for intervention. *Harvard Educational Review, 56,* 18-36.

Deyhle, D. & LeCompte, M. (1994). Cultural Differences in Child Development: Navajo Adolescents in Middle Schools. *Theory Into Practice,* 33, 3, 156-166.

Ferdman, B. (1990). Literacy and Cultural Identity. *Harvard Educational Review, 60,* 181-204.

Fernie, D., Kantor, R. & Klein, E. (1988). Becoming students and becoming ethnographers in a preschool. *Journal of Childhood Research in Education*. Vol. 3, No. 2.

Foster, M. (1992). Sociolinguistics and the African-American Community: Implications for Literacy. *Theory Into Practice*, Vol. XXXI, No. 4.

Freebody, P., Ludwig, C. & Gunn, S. (1995). *Everyday literacy practices in and out of schools in low socio-economic status urban communities: A descriptive and interpretive research program (Executive Summary)*. Unpublished draft report.

Gee, J. (1990). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses.* London: The Falmer Press.

Green, J., Kantor, R. & Rogers, T. (1991). Exploring the complexity of language and learning in the classroom. In B. Jones & L. Idol (Eds) *Educational values and cognitive instruction: Implications for reform, Vol. 2*, Hillsdale (NJ): Erlbaum, pp 333-364.

Green, J. & Wallat, C. (Eds). *Ethnography and language in educational settings.* Norwood (NJ): Ablex.

Gutierrez, K.D. (1994). How talk, context, and script shape contexts for learning: A cross-case comparison of journal sharing. *Linguistics and Education*, Vol. 5, (3 & 4).

Hannon, P. (1995). Literacy, Home and School: Research and practice in teaching literacy with parents. London: The Falmer Press.

Heath, S.B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language , life and work in community and classrooms.* Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

Jimenez, R., Garcia, G., & Pearson, P. D. (1995). Three Children, Two Languages, and Strategic Reading: Case studies in bilingual/monolingual reading. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32, 1, 67-97.

Locust, C. (1989). Wounding the spirit: Discrimination and traditional American belief systems.

Luke, A. (1993). Stories of social regulation: The micropolitics of classroom narrative, In B. Green (Ed.) *The insistence of the letter: Literacy studies and curriculum theorising*. London: The Falmer Press.

Luke, A. (1995). When Literacy Might/Not Make a Difference: Textual practice and capital. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Conference.

McCarty, T.L. (1987). School as Community: The Rough Rock Demonstration. *Harvard Educational Review*, 59, 4, 484-503.

Moll, L. (1993). Community-mediated educational practices. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Conference

Ogbu, J. U. (1992). Adaptation to Minority Status and Impact on School Success. *Theory Into Practice*, Vol. XXXI. 4, 287-295.

Puro, P. & Bloome, D. (?). Understanding Classroom Communication. *Theory Into Practice*, Vol. XXVI, 1, 26-31.

Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group (1992). Constructing Literacy in Classrooms: Literate action as social accomplishment. In Marshall, H. (Ed.) *Redefining Student Learning: Roots of Educational Change*. Ablex.

Scribner, S. & Cole, M. (1981). *The psychology of literacy.* Cambridge (MA):Harvard University Press.

Spradley, J.P. (1980). *Participant observation.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Taylor, D. (1983). *Family literacy: Young children learning to read and write.* Exeter (NH): Heinemann Educational.

Welch, A.R. & Freebody, P. (1993). Introduction: Explanations of the current international 'Literacy Crises' ", In P. Freebody & A. Welch (Eds). *Knowledge, culture & power: international perspectives on literacy as policy and practice.* London: Falmer Press.

Wells, G. (1985). Preschool literacy-related activities and success in school. In D.R. Olson, N. Torrance & A. Hildyard (Eds), *Literacy, language and learning: The nature and consequences of reading and writing.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Willis, A.I. (1995). Reading the World of School Literacy: Contextualising the experience of a young African American male. *Harvard Educational Review,* 65, 1, 30-48.

Zaharlick, A. & Green, J. (1991). Ethnographic research. *In Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts.* Norwood (NJ): Ablex.